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*Beginners' French*, by MAX WALTER and ANNA WOODS BALLARD. New York, Scribner, 1914. xxvi + 249 pp.

When, in 1911, Direktor Max Walter of the *Musterschule* at Frankfort on the Main came to the United States, he not only aroused enthusiasm at the Teachers' College of Columbia University, where he gave a substantial course, but also at all the institutions he visited during his stay. Known as he is as the leading exponent of the so-called Direct Method of teaching modern languages, everyone was interested in hearing and seeing his exposition; and everyone who heard and saw was impressed. Since this first visit, Professor Walter, in collaboration with Miss Ballard of the Teachers' College, has brought out in book form the lessons he makes use of in instructing beginners in French.

As we look over this book, we see that the appeal to the student is to be made first through the ear and then through the eye. If this is to be the case, then a great deal of time and care must be taken in the beginning to help the student to acquire an accurate pronunciation of the syllabic elements; he must be taught to distinguish between open and close vowel sounds, to enunciate consonants clearly; he must be taught the correct basis of articulation of the foreign language. The authors advise the free use of phonetic transcription for this purpose. The student once well started upon his pronunciation, the actual lessons begin. These lessons are largely *leçons de choses*, the teacher relying upon such objects as he sees about him or can easily command as a basis for teaching vocabulary, the book itself providing seventeen illustrations. From the first there is also inductive teaching of grammar. Lessons I, II and IV, for example, are on the article, Lessons III, V, VI, VIII-X, XII, XIV-XVII, XXXII, XXXIX, XL bring in the present indicative, and the other lessons bear similarly on other important points. The authors say: "In French the chief difficulty is the verb. From the beginning an exact and thorough knowledge of the verb is striven

for and the drill on it continues throughout the book." Therefore, in order to give this drill, an action or a series of actions, somewhat as in the Gouin Method, is frequently made the basis of the lesson, and the students are called upon to repeat so far as practicable the action mentioned, at the same time describing it aloud. In this way the attention of the pupil is concentrated upon what he is doing, he learns how to describe his movements in the foreign idiom without having to make use of his mother tongue as a medium. The lesson once comprehended orally, the student writes it down and then by a variety of ingenious methods is induced to make use of the words and phrases just learned.

The book contains sixty-three lessons based upon things, actions, or brief passages of descriptive prose. The common forms of ordinary conversation are covered and a vocabulary of some two thousand words is introduced. Following the lessons are a few anecdotes for reading, a most condensed résumé of grammar, the table of irregular verbs, four songs with music, and the vocabulary. As far as the details of the text go, there seems to be room for little criticism. Misprints are few and unimportant; some rules are given as absolute which are subject to exception, but no one could object to this in a book for beginners; and one or two statements are made which are not literally true, though they give rise to no misapprehension on the part of the reader.

As a presentation of the Direct Method of teaching languages the Walter-Ballard book is more explicit and more complete than any which has hitherto appeared. The successful use of it will, however, depend upon various circumstances. In the first place the Direct Method makes a far greater demand upon the teacher than any of the older methods. The instructor must be able to pronounce the foreign language with some degree of accuracy, he must have some conversational ability in the foreign tongue, he must command the attention and respect of his class so that the pupils will not regard the very active work as kindergarten play without serious intent. Granted that the teacher is what he should be, to obtain practical

results with average pupils, the class must be small enough for every member to recite frequently during every period, and the periods must come with sufficient frequency, not less than four times a week, so that there may be no lapse between the lessons. As Professor Downer said at a recent convention, "if you have fifty-three students to call upon in a fifty-three minute recitation period, what oral work can you expect of each?" The problem is easy enough to solve provided the teacher remain absolutely silent. Lesson III of the Walter-Ballard opens with the words: "In this lesson the pupil speaks as he performs the actions already learned. The class, helped by the teacher, says what each pupil does. The teacher works with individuals and with the class until all can give fluent answers." There follow three pages of French for oral practice.

All who have had the privilege of hearing Professor Walter, know that he has made a success of the Direct Method, they also know that he would have achieved unusual results by any method he had chosen to use. It remains to be seen whether the average teacher of beginners can handle this strikingly personal method with success.

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*Prinz Friedrich von Homburg. Ein Schauspiel, von HEINRICH VON KLEIST.* Edited with Introduction, Notes and Vocabulary by GEORGE MERRICK BAKER. New York, Oxford University Press, 1914.

About fifteen years ago Professor Nollen made accessible to students for the first time Kleist's masterpiece *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*. His edition was creditable for its time, but very much has been done since its appearance to clear up obscure portions of the poet's life and set him in correct relation to his times. The older edition was dependent upon the state of our knowledge at that time, and much of

Professor Nollen's Introduction is now known to be in error.

A new edition is therefore highly desirable, but it ought to show an advance upon the older work, if it is to justify its printing. Unfortunately the new edition by Baker is a complete disappointment. Apparently the researches of Kleist scholars in recent years have been wholly ignored by the editor, who frankly holds that Brahm is "the final word on Kleist."

In literary importance Kleist stands so close to the greatest classics of Germany that it is a pity no good biography of him is accessible to English readers. Considering this fact, it would seem an editorial blunder to limit the biographical sketch to fourteen pages. The whole is so condensed, that the reader could get no adequate idea of the personality of the poet, the chronological sequence of the really important events of his life, or his relation to his age, even if they were correctly presented. The uninitiated reader of this sketch (and for such it surely is written) will either form no conception at all of the poet's career, or any one of a thousand distorted ones.

But brevity is not the chief fault. Fundamental errors abound. Kleist's love of Nature was not first shown either at Dresden or in the Harz in 1797, but was marked already as early as 1793, when he went to the army of the Rhein. With the works of Morris and Rahmer and the Letters of Kleist before him, no editor should treat the Würzburg journey in this wise: "Accompanied by one of the younger members of the group, Ludwig von Brockes, he started on a trip to Dresden by way of Leipzig and Würzburg. The immediate cause of this journey is unknown, but it may be inferred from one of his letters, that he intended to look over the industrial situation with a view to changing his employment. At any rate the sojourn in Würzburg and Dresden marks an epoch in Kleist's life. Here at last he finds himself and his true vocation. From the larva of the business man develops unexpectedly the full-fledged poet." As many blunders as sentences!

The assumption that Kleist referred to his drama *Robert Guiskard* in a passage from a